(ii) To review export performance of various sectors, identify constraints and suggest measures to be taken both by Government and Industry/Trade, consistent with the need to maximise export earnings and to restrict imports,

(iii) To examine the existing institutional framework for exports and to suggest practical measures for reorganisation/ streamlining it with a view to ensuring coordinated and timely decision making.

(iv) To review the policy instruments, package of incentives, procedures for exports and to suggest steps to rationalise and channelise incentives to areas where they are most needed.

After the reconstitution, a meeting of the Board of Trade was held on 18th February, 1999. Consequent to the decision taken in the said meeting, four working groups comprising of members of Board were constituted for examining and analysing certain aspects related to export promotion.

These working groups met several times and submitted specific recommendations. Some of these recommendations were incorporated in the Exim policy amendments announced on 31.3.99.

Exports from NER

536. DR. ARUN KUMAR SARMA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) the steps initiated by Government to encourage exports from NER to the neighbouring countries;

(b) the details of the infrastructure facilities developed and proposed to be developed during Ninth Plan to further export activities; and

(c) the action taken so far on salient recommendations made in the 36th Report of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Commerce on development potential of Commerce in NER?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN): (a) and (b) Government has been taking various steps to boost exports from the North East Region which include, inter alia, grant of preferential treatment to export from NE region, sanction of projects for development of export infrastructure under the Critical Infrastructure Balance Scheme (CIBS), setting up of Export Promotion Industrial Park (EPIP) for better export production facilities, identification of Land Customs Stations for infrastructure development, and opening up of offices of various Export Promotion Councils and Commodity Boards.

(c) The status of action taken on the salient recommendations made in the 36th Report of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Commerce on development Potential of Commerce in NER is as follows:

(i) Export Promotion Industrial Parks have been sanctioned for Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur and Nagaland. So far Rs. 21.00 crores have been released to these States under the scheme.

(ii) Following announcement of New Industrial Policy for North Eastern Region and tax benefits for industries located in the North Eastern Region, new industries and units are expected to set up their base in the North Eastern Region. Government is also implementing the Integrated Industrial development (UD) and Growth Centre scheme in the North Eastern Region. Transport subsidy is available for transportation of raw materials and finished products to and from the point of production upto the designated point (Siliguri).

(iii) Tea Board, Rubber Board, Coffee Board, Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export development Authority (APEDA) and Spices Board have opened their offices at different location in the NE region for boosting exports of agricultural, horticultural and plantation exports.

(iv) So far seven projects have been sanctioned for the States of Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Tripura under the Critical Infrastructure Balance Scheme. Rs. 14.7147 crorer has been sanctioned for these projects.

(v) NH No. 31 in Assam, NH Nos. 40,51 and 62 in Meghalaya, NH 44 in Tripura and NH 39 in Manipur States connecting neighbouring countries viz., Bangladesh and Myanmar are being maintained in a traffic-worthy condition within the availability of funds. Highway from Karimganj to Sutarkhandi on Indo-Bangladesh border in Assam State has been declared as NH 151 during September, 1999 for promoting trade with Bangladesh.

The draft Ninth Five-Year Plan (1992-97 for the NE region provides for improvement of NHs and construction / reconstruction of bridges at an estimated cost of Rs. 2104 crore. This amount includes a mega project for construction of rail-cum-road bridge across Brahmaputra at Bogibeel near Dibrugarh on NH 52B costing about Rs. 942 Crore.

Growth Rate in Industrial Production

537. SHRI P. PRABHAKAR REDDY: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) the rate of industrial production in the country during Sep. 98 Sept. 99 as compared to the growth rate in corresponding period of the preceding year;

(b) whether it is a fact that growth rate has displayed a poor performance;

(c) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(d) the steps proposed to be taken, to boost up the growth rate including the growth in export and infrastructure sector?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (DR. RAMAN): (a) The overall growth rate of the index of industrial production during Sept. 1999 over Sept. 1998 was 7.6%.

(b) No Sir.

(c) Does't arise in view of (b) above.

(d) The steps proposed, interalia, are